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UNCLAS ANKARA 000404

SIPDIS

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ECA/PE/V/R/N: LMOODY

EUR/PPD: CTEAL

NEA/REA: CLAWSON

NEA/I-PD: NBAYRASLI

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SUBJECT: PROPOSAL FOR SUBREGIONAL PROJECT ON WATER COOPERATION

11. (U) Embassy Ankara and Embassy Baghdad propose the creation of a special sub-regional project for working-level officials on water policy. The goal of the project would be to bring together Iraqi and Turkish officials responsible for water policy for a look at US water issues in the hope that new relationships will be formed new channels for discussion opened.

12. (SBU) Discussions on water between Turkey and Iraq are at a standstill. There is a long history of mutual distrust and conflict between the two countries over the management of the Tigris-Euphrates River basin system that they share (along with Syria and Iran). Despite high level contacts since 2003, there has been little to no interaction or cooperation at the critical technical and working levels.

13. (U) In order to encourage such interaction, we would like to attempt a more nuanced approach targeting professional level water officials. Our hope is that by bringing together professional level civil servants on a program about water problems in a different context, the participants will engage in a more meaningful dialogue that will begin to break down their mutual distrust.

14. (U) Our vision of the program is a three week project for approximately ten participants from Turkey and Iraq. The project would focus on integrated management of river basins, including trans-boundary rivers. Participants would meet their peers who work on technical issues and water policy as well as operational managers who turn policy into practice. In preparation for this program, we would work with water officials from both countries to identify specific issues of common interest and importance that USG water officials could demonstrate to the participants. There are many examples of potentially programming opportunities, including US-Canadian cooperation on the Great Lakes and Souris River basin, as well as domestic U.S. river systems having multiple stakeholders, such as the Colorado River Basin.

15. (U) We believe that this project would advance understanding of the purely technical aspects of monitoring and gathering data on these large watersheds. In addition, we hope that the program would enhance the participants' understanding of bilateral/multilateral institutional mechanisms for exchanging data and collaborating on joint management of shared water resources.

16. (U) Since this issue is of critical regional importance, we propose that the Department fund this project in addition to current International Visitor Leadership Program allocations for FY-06. This would allow posts more flexibility in choosing their candidates, allowing for a broader spectrum of government actors.

17. (U) Posts welcome the Department's input and response. Points of contact are as follows: for Ankara, ACAO Ben Ball ([ballbs@state.gov](mailto:ballbs@state.gov)); for Baghdad, CAO Deborah Hart ([hartds@state.gov](mailto:hartds@state.gov)) and ACAO Ilya Levin ([levinid@state.gov](mailto:levinid@state.gov)).

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